

AUTHORS' REPLY

Dear Sir,

We agree with the author regarding the health problems in medical education,⁽¹⁾ as confirmed by other studies conducted on this topic. As medical students are at risk of exposure to hazardous agents and contagious diseases, they should be covered by a comprehensive health surveillance system in each university.

Medical students are not aware of the different infectious and non-infectious risk factors which they are occupationally exposed to, as well as their prevention methods. Our previous study on Iranian medical students showed that more than 20% of the medical students had not been vaccinated against measles, mumps and rubella, and about 10%, against hepatitis B. None of the medical students received varicella vaccine, and about 40% did not receive a booster dose of tetanus and diphtheria vaccine.⁽²⁾ While some guidelines recommend that immunity be checked by the level of serum antibodies in high-risk groups such as healthcare workers, it should be done according to the epidemiological and economic situation.

However, a comprehensive health surveillance system should include non-communicable diseases and disorders. Similar to Boo et al's study,⁽³⁾ our previous study showed that more than 16% of the medical students were overweight and about 4% were obese.⁽⁴⁾ In addition, other studies done on medical students in our university showed that 40.9% of the students suffered from iron deficiency,⁽⁵⁾ 10.8% from exercise-induced bronchospasm,⁽⁶⁾ and 35.7% of the female students suffered from premenstrual syndrome.⁽⁷⁾ Although some of these disorders are not more common in the general population, medical students require a comprehensive health surveillance system because they play an important role in providing healthcare in the future.

We strongly agree with the author and think that it is the time to plan and act for a better health surveillance and care system for our medical students. We have started doing so by introducing a comprehensive health surveillance system in the Tehran University of Medical Sciences in 2004.

Yours sincerely,

Sedigheh Shams

Pathology Department
Children's Medical Centre
Tehran University of Medical Sciences
Dr Gharib Street
Keshavarz Boulevard
Tehran
Iran
Email: shams@sina.tums.ac.ir

Vahid Ziaee

Paediatrics Department

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